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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/WATERS

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TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: FATAH REFORM IN GAZA: INTERNAL DIVISIONS THREATEN
PROGRESS

REF: JERUSALEM 648

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary. On April 10, senior Fatah activist Ahmad Hillis organized a conference attended by 1,700 Fatah members in Gaza City. While the conference's theme, "Our Message," was intended to energize grassroots Fatah activists around Fatah's public message and political program, the speakers concentrated on building support for Hillis while implicitly criticizing NSA Muhammad Dahlan and his allies. Dahlan told the Consul General on April 11 that Fatah is unstable in Gaza, with various leaders fighting over control of the Gaza Field Committee budget and payouts. Committee head coordinator Majid Abu Shammali is in charge of Fatah's reform program in Gaza, he said, but Hillis is challenging his control over the committee's budget. Dahlan said he made recommendations on field committee membership, but in his view Fatah reform is principally President Mahmud Abbas' (Abu Mazen) responsibility. End Summary.

Rally by Gaza Fatah Leader Ahmad Hillis

¶2. (SBU) On April 10, senior Fatah activist and Gaza Fatah Committee member Ahmad Hillis held a conference and rally attended by 1700 Fatah members at the Rashad al-Shawa Cultural Center in Gaza City. While the conference's theme, "Our Message," was intended to energize grassroots Fatah activists and coordinate Fatah's public message and political program, speakers concentrated on building support for Hillis and implicitly criticizing NSA Muhammad Dahlan and his allies.

¶3. (SBU) Among Hillis' remarks to the conference included veiled criticism of Dahlan. Hillis told the gathering: "The US dollar is not the engine that drives Fatah. . . Fatah shall continue to maintain a patriotic line away from Israeli, US and European schemes." He added: "Supporting individuals from Fatah will empower neither those individuals nor Fatah. This gathering is meant to strengthen the unity of the movement, which shall not be divided no matter what. . . Those who work in the dark fear reality, but we all stand for working in broad daylight." Senior Gaza Fatah leader Muhammad Fudah told the assembled Fatah members that "Fatah will not accept privatization and will not turn into a private company owned by individuals. Fatah has taught us to be free and we shall be free and will not yield but to God. We shall not serve anyone's personal agenda and shall not be an army of mercenaries." (Note: While Dahlan is unnamed, he is widely thought to be the target of this rhetoric. End note).

¶4. (SBU) Muhammad al-Muzayn, a Gaza-based Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC) member, said "Fatah shall only

work according to its own interests and agendas, the first of which is the liberation of Palestine and ending the occupation." He said the gathering met to declare opposition to the creation of any new structures in the movement that do not serve the movement's interests. He said Fatah respects the legitimate, elected bodies of Fatah and shall not work with anyone to undermine them. (Note: Al-Muzayn's comments are an attack on the newly-created Fatah field committees that are composed of many Dahlan supporters and reflect the view of many FRC members that the power of the FRC must be protected from the threat of the field committees. End note).

Dahlan: Hillis is the Problem

¶5. (S) Dahlan told the Consul General on April 11 that Fatah is unstable in Gaza, with various leaders fighting over control of the Gaza Field Committee budget. He said the head of the committee, Majid Abu Shammali (a Dahlan ally), is in charge of Fatah's reform program in Gaza, but faces a rebellious group led by Ahmad Hillis. Dahlan accused Hillis of seeking only to get control of the committee's resources. Fatah reform is principally President Abbas' responsibility, Dahlan said, adding that he had recommended certain field committee members, but he is unwilling to "inherit Fatah from Abu Mazen." He also said Abbas must address Fatah issues in the West Bank as well (i.e., funding the field committee headed by Hussayn al-Shaykh) and clarify what role Ahmad Quraya' (Abu Ala'a) will have as the head of the Office of Mobilization.

Abbas: Elections Will Resolve Divide

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¶6. (S) In an April 14 meeting the Consul General, President Abbas said selection of new leaders through elections will resolve current internal faction disputes. The Fatah coordinating and field committees' goal is to administer internal elections, he said, which will help rebuild Fatah, and their work is proceeding, especially in Gaza.

Comment

¶7. (C) Ahmad Hillis was Secretary-General of Gaza's High Committee from 1996 until late 2006, when Abbas created the Gaza field committee to supersede the High Committees. Hillis is a longtime rival of Dahlan, with support from some veteran Fatah activists and the powerful Hillis clan. (Note: This clan is well-represented in the upper echelons of the security forces and includes his brother, Sulayman Hillis, who until recently commanded Gaza's National Security Forces. End Note). Dahlan has support from the PSO (and some other security officers) and segments of Fatah youth movements -- and now the Gaza field committee. Hillis is perceived as a consistent opponent of Israeli occupation and policies, while Dahlan is vulnerable to accusations of "collaboration." Dahlan and Hillis are each too strong for the other to ignore, and must constantly renegotiate their relationship through intermediaries. Hillis accepted the new field committee -- and its disproportionate number of Dahlan supporters -- because he was made part of the higher-level Fatah coordinating committee. The expectation was that this committee, under the leadership of Rawhi Fatuh, would coordinate the activities of the Gaza and West Bank field committees. However, the coordinating committee has not met and its role has not been articulated. In addition, Abu Ala'a's appointment to lead the Office of Mobilization and his insistence that he coordinates grassroots activities call into question Abu Mazen's intention to use the coordinating committee. Hillis may feel like whatever bargain he and

Dahlan agreed to has not been kept.

WALLES